

REPORT FROM TURKEY

EQuIP Meeting, Kranjska Gora, 16-18 June 2003



- Rules for Residency Education Finally Changed

The former regulations for residency education were established in 1973. Due to the rapid changes in medicine and education, there was a strong need for the update of the rules. In June 2002, the Ministry of Health finished the new version of the rules regulating residency education. According to the new rules, the durations of most residencies have increased. As some examples: the durations of pediatrics, internal medicine, and gynecology-obstetrics have increased from 4 to 5 years. The duration of family medicine residency education remained the same (3 years). The most striking change in the new regulations is probably related with the content of the education. The new rules assign a council of 14 persons to define details related with the content such as the number and duration of rotations. Council members consist of representatives from the ministry of health, teaching hospitals, and the medical association. Representatives from the specialty associations are not included in the council.

- Elections Performed: New Party Declared to Change the Health System

Turkey made new deputy elections on 3 November 2002. The Party of Justice and Progress (AKP) won the elections with enough positions for a single party management. AKP was one of the two parties who included plans for family practice in their program. The program of AKP claims to change the health system to cover all of the population. The government shall make contracts with private health providers if necessary. In this context, a health system suitable for the practice of family physicians shall be introduced. The ministry of health will define standards of the family practice offices.

- Good Institutional Relationships Between TAHUD and the new Government

Since the new elected party aims to change the health system and improve family practice, it was not a surprise that the Turkish Association of Family Physicians (TAHUD) established good relations with the new government from the beginning. Several meetings were done between

the ministry of health and TAHUD executive to discuss especially those problems of the Turkish health system related with primary care. Both sides have declared their wish and will for future collaboration.

- **TAHUD is Strives for Cooperation with the Turkish Medical Union**

As the representative of all doctors in Turkey, the Turkish Medical Union (TTB) has an important power as well as responsibility. Since a lot of regulatory as well as practical changes related with the health care are expected due to the adaptation process with the European Union, it is of utmost importance to have good collaboration and cooperation with the different health organs. Aware of its commitment, TAHUD has declared the wish for cooperated work with TTB. Positive approaches from both sides are necessary to make the radical changes needed in the Turkish health system.

- **Second Turkish Family Practice Days are Planned for 2003**

Family physicians are organizing national congresses on a two-year period. The fifth congress was performed in March 2002. Increasing needs for sharing knowledge and new developments led the Turkish association to organize family practice days every two years additionally. The first family practice days were performed in November 2001. Now the department of family practice at the Sivas Cumhuriyet University has taken action to organize the next family practice days in 2003. The main theme of the meeting will be 'psychological aspects of child health'. It is expected that the national days will be performed on a regular basis.

- **Turkish Family Physicians Voted for The new Executive of TAHUD**

Elections were performed to choose the new executive of the Turkish Association of Family Physicians (TAHUD). Some of the former delegates stayed in their positions, but most of the seven delegates of the executive, including the president, changed. Prof. Suleyman Gorpelioglu, who is also one of the EQuIP delegates of Turkey has been elected as the new president. It can be expected that, this development will probably have positive effects on the application of the ideas raised by EQuIP in Turkey.

- **TAHUD Organized Workshops to Define its Official Policy**

One of the first actions of the new executive of TAHUD was to organize two consecutive workshops in December 2002 and February 2003 in Ankara. With around 40 participants in each workshop, these activities were a kind of nationwide collection of ideas. The main theme of both workshops was to define the official policy of TAHUD with regard to the current national and international developments. Special attention was given to the declared health plans of the new government and the mission TAHUD should have during this process. Every aspect of family practice in Turkey was examined with a broad vision, and official declarations were done at the end of each workshop. The written statements will be translated into English and put into the TAHUD web page (<http://www.tahud.org.tr>).

- **Pilot Trial of Quality Circles**

Quality circles are a rather new subject for Turkey. There are some experiences in private hospitals and in the industry. Our quality circle experiences with medical students since 2000 have encouraged us to start quality circles among primary care physicians. Our efforts to keep active dialog with the untrained GP's has resulted in a good cooperation. We have established a voluntary group of seven GP's to conduct quality circles in Edirne. The participants will be followed with regard to prescribing behaviors as well as patient and physician satisfaction for one year. We hope that the results of this trial will help to spread quality circles throughout Turkey.

- **The last meeting of WONCA-EGPRW was performed in Ankara**

WONCA-EGPRW meetings are done every 6 months in one of the member countries. The 56th meeting was held in Ankara with 62 participants. Thirty-eight participants were from Turkey. Assoc. Professor Mehmet Urgan, the organizer, vice chair of TAHUD, Turkish national representative and executive board member of EGPRW has received many positive feedbacks, especially related with the method of the meeting, and the kind relationships established with participants from European countries. Also the executive committee of the Turkish Association of Family Physicians (TAHUD) has expressed pleasure for such a successful activity in Turkey. It seems that Turkish family physicians will be more sensitive in following the future EGPRW (with the new name EGPR N) meetings.

- **WONCA-Membership of the Turkish Association of Family Physicians Approved**

The Turkish Association of Family Physicians (TAHUD) is the representative of family physicians in Turkey. TAHUD management was striving for institutional WONCA membership since approximately six years. It was thought that WONCA had some concerns in approving this membership because of the presence of the association of untrained GP's in Turkey. It is a fact of Turkey that there are thousands of untrained GP's active in primary care positions, and it is the obligation of Turkey to give vocational training to these physicians before entering the EU. With over 30 family practice departments at the universities, family physicians are regarded as the main resource to give this training. Hence, as in many other countries, we expect to end with a single association for all primary care physicians in Turkey. Institutional membership to WONCA was certainly one of the most important priorities of Turkish family physicians. WONCA has approved the membership of TAHUD in its meeting in April 2003. With this development, Turkish family physicians are expected to be more active in the international arena, such as organization of one of the upcoming WONCA congresses.

- **Number of Family Practice Centers Continue to Increase**

In its current situation, family practice residency education in Turkey takes place mainly in hospital settings. With the new regulations, it will be possible to include primary care places in the residency education. For this reason, it is very important for Turkish family physicians to have as many family practice centers connected to family practice departments as possible. The last family practice center has been opened by the Adnan Menderes University Family Practice Department in Aydın.

- **New Developments in Academic Area: the Number of Academicians and Departments Continues to Increase**

As one of the latest developments in the academic area, a new family practice department has been established at the Akdeniz Universtiy Medical Faculty. Associate Professor Hakan Yaman has been appointed as department chair.

Currently there are 32 family practice departments (50 universities total) with one professor, nine associate professors, and 35 assistant professors in Turkey.

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